



HOUSE BILL 1224 – ELECTRICITY AND GAS – ENERGY SUPPLIERS – ASSISTED CUSTOMERS

UNFAVORABLE

HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS COMMITTEE

MARCH 9, 2020

NRG Energy, Inc. (“NRG”) submits these comments in **opposition** to **HB 1224 – Electricity and Gas – Energy Suppliers – Assisted Customers**.

NRG is a Fortune 500 company, delivering customer focused solutions for managing electricity, while enhancing energy choice and working towards a sustainable energy future. We put customers at the center of everything we do. We create value by generating electricity and serving more than 3 million residential and commercial customers through our portfolio of retail electricity brands – including here in Maryland, where NRG owns four companies that are licensed by the Public Service Commission to serve retail customers. These companies offer customers a range of products ranging from cash back rewards and loyalty points, to charitable giving and 100% renewable electricity.

NRG opposes HB 1224 for the simple reason that it denies a large segment of Maryland customers of the right to choose the source of their energy supply and who supplies it – a right that all Maryland customers enjoy today.

The General Assembly adopted competition for electricity and gas supplies more than two decades ago which gave all consumers the right to choose. Today, competitive suppliers compete with each other to offer value to consumers, sometimes in the form of savings relative to the utility SOS rate, but more often in the form of some other benefit or value to the customer, be it renewable energy content, loyalty rewards – like airline miles or hotel points – energy efficiency measures aimed at reducing a customers’ overall bill – like Nest thermostats – gift cards to local merchants, or by managing the risk of market fluctuations by providing price stability through longer term fixed prices.

When the market opened to competition, the Public Service Commission was allocated \$6 million to educate consumers about the transition to competition and their right to choose. It has been twenty years since any funds were allocated to help customers understand their choices and how to make good shopping decisions.

Rather than restrict an entire class of customers and deny them the ability to choose that all other Marylanders enjoy, NRG urges the Committee to instead allocate funding to the PSC to undertake a comprehensive education campaign with a focus on customers that are financially challenged. The PSC should be directed to work with OHEP to educate their clients at the time they enroll for assistance and periodically thereafter. These customers have the right to benefit

from the same choices that other customers enjoy and rather than taking away their access to such products, they should be pointed toward products and services aimed at meeting their unique needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective on HB 1224 and for the above reasons NRG urges the Committee give the bill an **unfavorable** report.

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